In Addition to Death: Maria and Monongah's Aftermath

By Joseph L. Tropea

This article identifies the social and cognitive norms that degraded the value of a largely descriptive mining literature by examining the aftermath of the 1907 Monongah explosions and the experiences of a transnational migrant, Maria. The literature treated death as only a physical reality, not a social construction, and recovery as procedural, not causal, and emotions relegated to death, not shaped by other ordeals, while neglecting women's experiences in exploring aftermath organization and its consequences. This work uses primary sources and substantiated memories to illustrate how covert recovery of dead miners made horrors beyond death, rational administration of relief made distributions seem arbitrary, and how tortured memories helped corroborate the recovery's covert operations. Findings show not only relations between aftermath organization and intimate sorrows of a widow but also how biography expands the frames of time, action, and consequence. Maria's life also demonstrates the importance of language, culture, and character in exploring disasters. Though an ordinary and imperfect woman, Maria affirms the importance of gender in exploring the intricacies of social organization and social history. This work also—and unexpectedly—confirms the importance of time, particularly when a disaster-related and fatal consequence occurred almost two decades after the explosions.

Descriptions and the Unexplored

On the morning of December 6, 1907, Maria and her children were outside their home—Company House 177—making soap when explosions shook the earth, swung the cauldron, and threw them to the ground. The explosions killed Maria's husband, brother, two of her sons, a boarder, and 354 other miners from Italy; the British Isles; the Russian, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian Empires; and the United States (personal interview).[1] Those explosions in interconnected Mines 6 and 8 in Monongah, West Virginia, constituted the greatest coal mine disaster in US history, achieved

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international notoriety, and drove national regulations (Aldrich 1995). Like many disasters of the period, they produced hearings, reports, and legends, but little substantiated social history (*Report of Hearings* 1909; "Coroner's Record for Mine Explosion" 1908; Lauck 1910; US Immigration Commission 1911; Aldrich 1995; Korson 1943; Rossi 2007).[2] This lack of validated knowledge may seem a likely consequence of an unanticipated disaster with its mayhem, death, and horror, to say nothing of the absence of trained and well-positioned observers. However, even more deliberative disaster investigations directed by technical experts regularly compromised the "truths of a catastrophic event" (Knowles 2003, 11). The pernicious effects of uncritical descriptive accounts and official investigations on the history of the Monongah disaster appear in government and university publications, dissertations, and articles, as well as in legends, public histories, memorials, and monuments that echo and embellish claims without evidence (see US Department of Labor at https://www.msha.gov/general-contacts; McAteer 2007; Gürsel 2007; Lombardi 2007; Todd 1957; Bonasso 2003; *Anniversary Year* 1957; "Centennial Remembrance" 2007; Wilson 2011).[3] Although the turmoil and unexpectedness of disasters may justify legend as a part of coal mining knowledge, a critical review of sources, contexts, and concepts helps explain the weak challenge to legend.

The usual sources of information on disasters are descriptive accounts produced for regional interests and constructed from press reports, company records, public hearings, individual recall, government reports, and magazine articles (*New York Times* 1907; Haas 1908; Report of Hearings 1909; Dilley 1900; Kalisch 1972; Rakes 2008; Wolfe 1999).[4] Why this uncritical, rather local, approach? Scholars in the emergent social sciences of the early and mid-twentieth century provided little ballast for this provincial genre of history; they were more interested in relations among capital, labor, migration, and social conflict than in particulars of disaster (Tropea 2017b).[5] The social class and ethnicity of victims also limited scholarly interest and research, especially when they were transnational migrants, as were over three-fourths of the Monongah dead. A local public historian candidly said, for example, that "they didn't really care" about those people (personal interview).[6] As in most mine disasters, moreover, Monongah's victims were male, and women were discounted as informed sources. Instead, women's emotional expressions were highlighted, framed within gendered and ethnic stereotypes (Kellogg 1907–1908).[7] Additionally, resources for constructing evidence-based transnational histories were beyond local capacities as well as interests. Finally, cognitive norms undermined or subverted descriptive accounts: death was seen as physical, not a social construct; recovery was procedural, not causal; women's reactions were tied to death, not other ordeals; culture, language, and biography were not considered

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integral to understanding the organization of the aftermath; and the time frame of researchers' interest limited discovery and analysis of long-term and personal consequences. As a result, most portrayals that focused on gendered deaths and gendered tears did not document the physical or social transformations of the dead, recovery workers, or the widows. They neither explored the range of women's emotions and the informative value of women's experiences nor documented the actions and observations that shaped legend and distorted history (Tropea 2013b, 2017b). The anecdotal treatment of structural factors in most disasters—covert and bureaucratic organization, tacit and public rules, body recovery, identification and burial, women's agency—has also left many events and transactions poorly explored and explained.

Fortunately, Monongah is exceptional not only for the scale of its disaster but also for its available sources, which allow the investigation of what too often has been ignored. The Monongah Mines Relief Committee (MMRC) records, housed in the West Virginia and Regional History Center at West Virginia University, holds, among other items, a folio for each of the dead miners; notes of recovery workers; aftermath survey documents; maps of mines and the principal cemetery; domestic and international communications from religious, commercial, and governmental institutions; personal letters from kin and priests; relief administration documents; financial records for each beneficiary; and a final report. But for over a century, the MMRC collection was not examined critically enough to decipher and correct its formidable flaws. For example, many documents are based on phonetic transcriptions of names and locations. "Body" was used metaphorically in recovery actions and literally in reports, transnational communications were misconstrued, and much else (Tropea 2013b). To correct, corroborate, and organize MMRC information for reliable results, the use of additional US and European documents and interviews has proved necessary.[8] Until the present work, research on the Monongah explosion has not documented and analyzed (1) individual experiences with covert recovery actions; (2) social constructions and transformations of recovery workers, dead miners, and women; (3) the place of relief administration, widows' emotions, and biographies; or (4) the informative value of women in helping uncover the actions and consequences of Monongah's aftermath. To fill some of those gaps, prior to this article, four refereed works were produced that were related to the Monongah disaster and based on the MMRC collection, other domestic and international archives, and interviews (Tropea 2013a, 2013b; Tropea and Salvati 2017; Tropea 2017b). This article explores unexamined topics by documenting the effects of Monongah's aftermath, particularly on the life of Maria Gaetani Abate, the woman who made soap.[9]

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Shock, Sham, and Women

Post-explosion discoveries and actions in Monongah transformed dead miners, recovery workers, and the bereaved. Workers, once hopeful but stunned by discoveries of splattered flesh, settled in to accumulate parts, shape make-believe bodies, and carry the sheathed forms above ground. Women held fragile hope and a firm focus on the convoy of covered heaps, until their hope trickled to exhaustion and the heaps began to signal widowhood.

The early hours of horror and ritual that fixed workers, women, and other observers on caravans of uncertain remains served as rehearsal for later control of public revulsion and turmoil. First, recovery workers, then workers in the morgue and others, including company officials, developed clandestine ways to communicate about, bury, and identify the unidentifiable dead (Tropea 2017b). The disciplined stealth and sham in identification and burial were competent enough to mislead accounts of the aftermath. But they were flawed enough to entangle widows in an inhumane hoax: the "check system" for identifying workers who were in the mines had been lost in the explosions' force, so to compile a list of missing miners, company men interrogated bereaved women (Tropea 2013b, 2017b).[10] These interrogated women, who had observed the transport of uncertain corpses, now learned that the company had no more account of their men's whereabouts than of their bodies. Each bereaved widow was also questioned

Figure 1: Sheathed remains (image used with permission from West Virginia and Regional History Center, WVU Libraries).

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Figure 2: Women waiting (image used with permission from West Virginia and Regional History Center, WVU Libraries).

about who lived in the house, who may have lived in the house, and who was missing, presumably dead. They would soon learn that payroll names had been randomly assigned to unidentified bodies, body parts, and previously buried "unknown" matter—and these unidentified composites of flesh would be given to them to mourn (Tropea 2017b). The interviews in the meantime were cruel and capricious events, especially for women without the language or background to fathom a rationale for faking bodily integrity. Needless to say, these experiences were not explored in official accounts. Indeed, the report of a company engineer made light of migrants' behavior at the cemetery (Haas 1908). Monongah legend also has a widow so deeply distraught over the hoax concerning her husband's body that confusion and misery undermined her effective capacities for the rest of her lifetime—a supposition uninformed by research, evidence, or biography (Tropea 2013a). The organized aftermath actions that shaped women's

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concerns and behaviors need evidence and explication, not heartless ridicule or loose inference. The case of Maria Gaetani Abate documents a more thorough view of Monongah's aftermath and its long-term effects.

Horror, Hysteria, and Women

Recovery workers who entered Monongah's blasted mines found horror: "a disemboweled mule, or the charred, crushed thing that had been a miner or a headless trapper boy" (Kellogg 1907–1908, 1319). Some recovery workers were brought out unconscious or half-crazed from what they had witnessed and breathed; some died (Monongah Mines Relief Committee 1910). Workers inhaled afterdamp (a toxic mixture of gases including carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, and nitrogen), saw animal and human flesh destroyed beyond recognition, and assembled this matter into body forms, which they sheathed in preparation for carrying above ground, where the women waited (Kellogg 1907–1908). The significance of the obscured flesh was lost over time, but body parts and "wailing wives" were remembered decades later in Congress by US Senator M. M. Neely who, as a member of the West Virginia National Guard, was posted in Monongah during the aftermath:

> The tents were soon filled with the lifeless bodies of ghastly men: there were bodies without arms; bodies without legs; bodies without heads; heads without bodies. On every hand there were weeping fathers and mothers, wailing wives and sobbing little children, and scenes of horror and outbursts of agony so heartrending that earth has no language adequate to describe them. (Neely 1952, 4882)

Widows were reported near madness with frenzied grief: "[She] tore blood out of her face"; "two crazed women on the hill . . . had to be tied down to their beds and the young widow . . . who lived just over No. 8 mine . . . tore out her . . . hair in grabs"; they "clawed their nails into the flesh of their cheeks or threatened to throw their babies into the river"; a woman who had lost sons, brothers, and a husband ran "along the railroad tracks tearing at her face and hair" (Kellogg 1907–1908, 1313). Rage receded to resignation, yearning, and enduring anguish: "We know he's gone, but if we only had his body out of the pit"; "She had forty-five cents when they brought Tom home"; "all little ones and not a bite to eat yesterday and him home dead"; "[His] wife stood on the porch . . . stupid in her loss, the face knotted, with two little open-mouthed children whimpering and plucking at her apron"; "Italian mother . . . with no money and no English and two little bits of children" (Kellogg 1907–1908, 1317). Prejudicial as well as patronizing observations accompanied depictions of women's weeping, frenzied, resigned, or stupefied behavior: "Across the street the tears were

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running down the face of the Italian storekeeper and she was giving herself up to the impetuous crying of her race" (Kellogg 1907–1908, 1315).

These portrayals of widows as agitated marionettes tightly strung to dead men effectively discounted the need to explore the recovery and its impacts on women's understanding, emotions, and actions—the informative value of their sorrows. A woman's personal history was not allowed to mediate death's effects, and her engagement with the organization of recovery and relief held no value in assessing its covert or bureaucratic nature and consequences. Such behavioral assumptions, gendered orientations, and absence of exploration shape descriptions of mine disasters in ways that not only limit actual knowledge of organizational behavior but also open up a place for legend as social history. Maria's life helps illustrate this process of distortion.

Deceptions, Miseries, and History

Most of the newly widowed transnational migrants, like Maria, were only recently wedded to wage labor and domesticity in a foreign land when explosions abruptly eliminated that role.[11] Most of these widows had children, spoke a dialect of Italian, and owned few resources. Some, like Maria, had no trusted adults nearby with whom they could communicate. Maria was thrust into a torrent of horror with little solace, for other women were overwhelmed by their own loss and grief, and the priests were as engaged in helping the company manage the mangled dead as in attending to their tormented flocks.[12] Maria was alone in many ways. She was the only living adult from Company House 177 when company agents entered to interrogate her about missing miners. This intrusion was imperative for the company since its "check system" to identify men working in the mines had been obliterated, and yet the presence of the clamoring international press demanded continuous progress in body removal and identification. The company's inability to account for the dead was kept from public attention by using names from payroll records, not from body recovery—one of many covert maneuvers in the aftermath (Tropea 2017b).

The company's intent and questions in the survey of residents may seem reasonable given the circumstances, but not for women like Maria who did not understand English and were not used to independent exchanges with Anglo-Saxon men, certainly not in endorsing payroll records or confirming deaths in the mines (Tropea 2013a, 2013b). This intrusion of strangers, whose mission was ominous and perplexing, further agitated saddened, anxious, and inarticulate widows. Divisions of culture, ethnicity, and gender, as well as language, added more misgivings to engagement with survey personnel. Worse, the survey eventually revealed to the women that their men's situations were unknown to the company. Maria suffered a special

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aloneness: she had lost a brother, husband, two sons, and a boarder in Mine 6; she had no other family or *paesani* (fellow countrymen) in Monongah; and she had five dependent children remaining (MMRC, miner file 2). It is not surprising—whether from her emotional state, reticence, resistance, or mutual misunderstandings—that the company interview with her recorded much error, as did the press. A reporter noted that Maria "lost her husband, one son of nineteen, and a trapper boy of fourteen: 'Woman cry all the time'" (Kellogg 1907–1908, 1314). Maria had also lost a brother, which the reporter may not be expected to have known. Yet the company also did not acknowledge the brother's death until six months after the disaster.[13] The continuing effort to locate the dead, more intrusions into Company House 177, and additional consequences of bureaucratic procedures, as well as covert actions, disoriented Maria and broke her heart again and again. Yet for over a century, in print and legend, women's "hysteria" was credited only to death, not to events and emotions that transpired in the organization of the disaster's aftermath.

When company personnel first entered houses to identify missing miners, they used a payroll list of largely phonetically recorded names or nicknames to compare with responses to their questions. The results were rough. Surveyors recorded who was said to be missing, who they thought was said to be missing, or their guesses of who may have been missing. Their uncertain notations were matched with inexact payroll names or nicknames: in some cases, survey results were more accurate in name identity than the flawed payroll records. Moreover, what the surveyors recorded could not be read, let alone corrected or contested, by illiterate and non-English speaking persons like Maria. Records for Company House 177 illustrate the kinds of errors that were made, then corrected, but not necessarily improved. The records suggest why the death of Maria's brother was not made a matter of record until six months after the explosions (MMRC, house survey, company house 177, miner file 2).

The brother's name was recorded as "Franc Digaetano" but on the MMRC form as "Francesco Antonio," which was later crossed over to read "Francesco Gaetano"; all three renditions are incorrect (house survey; miner file 131).[14] This document illustrates more than the kind of jumbled recording that helped muddle Monongah's history; it evidences the kinds of frenetic, confusing, and troubling actions that made worse the sorrows and fears of an illiterate widow who didn't speak English.

The adverse impact of the survey was more than exceeded by the covert treatment of bodies. Most confusion, error, and incredulity in the recovery resulted from bodies that could not be found or, if found, were greatly disturbed, or partial wholes, or simply aggregated pieces of flesh whose source may have been draft animal or miner. Managers of the recovery tried

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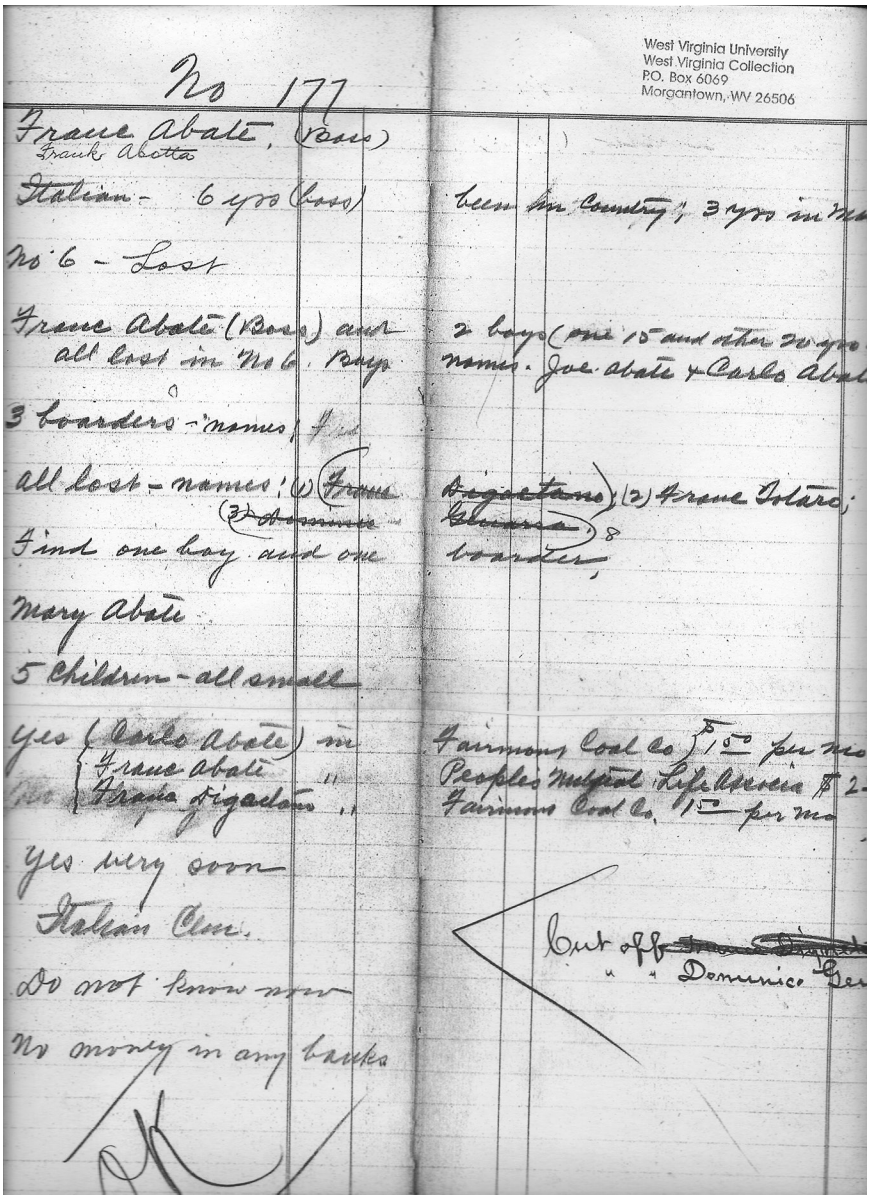
Figure 3: House survey (image used with permission from West Virginia and Regional History Center, WVU Libraries).


West Virginia University
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P.O. Box 6069
Morgantown, WV 26506
No 177
France Abate (Boss)
Frank Abotta
Italian - 6 yrs (Boss)
No 6 - Lost
France Abate (Boss) and
all lost in No 6. Boys
3 boarders - names, #
all lost - names, (1) France
(2) Domenico
(3)
Find one boy and one
Mary Abate
5 children - all small
yes { Carlo Abate } in
no { France Abate "
{ Frank Figadore "
yes very soon
Italian Con.
Do not know now
No money in any banks
been in Country, 3 yrs in
2 boys (one 15 and other 20 yrs
names. Joe. Abate + Carlo Abat
Figaetano, (2) France Solare,
boarder,
Fairmont Coal Co } 1.50 per mo
Peoples Mutual Life Assoc # 2.
Fairmont Coal Co. 1.00 per mo
Cut off
" " Domenico Ber

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to manage and moderate this dreadful reality through stealthy practices, whose consequences, as in Maria's case, intensified her torments (Tropea 2013a). Foreboding over a loved one whose corpse might have no integrity was worsened by the divides in culture and power that separated migrant widows from the men who were furtively managing the dead. Within a few days, Maria suffered the sudden deaths of four immediate family members in an alien place, hasty intrusions of company surveyors with confounding intents, a public parade of covered bodies, and unidentifiable body matter placed in Company House 177 for her and her children to mourn (personal interview). The incident of five boxed remains deposited in Company House 177 was decisive in pain, recall, and ritual, and it illustrates well the relationship between covert organization and new, unsettling emotions.[15]

For many years after the explosions, when Maria and "the old people" gathered and talked about Monongah, their memories were transfixed and orchestrated by the five wooden boxes. A granddaughter remembers how, as they wept, they discussed the pristine condition of the body of Giuseppe, the trapper boy and youngest son; but for the remains in the other four boxes, they only cried (personal interview).[16] Linking such living memory with MMRC documents provides a sharp contrast to the anecdotal and patronizing press reports that attributed emotions to "Slavic" culture or the ignorance of migrants with no role for covert organization, in which the company played a major part (Haas 1908, 18; Kellogg 1907–1908, 1315).[17] Yet evidence (see following paragraph) clearly shows that the four boxes did not in fact hold coherent remains of a husband, brother, son, or boarder—demonstrating the sham of the recovery, not the immaturities of migrant culture or emotional women. Whose body matter was placed in those four boxes, and how much Maria was aware of their contents, is not known.

The body of Maria's son, Giuseppe, an enterprising fourteen-year-old who earned extra money by cutting hair, was intact (personal interview). Giuseppe died from asphyxiation, not from the explosion's force, and his body was taken out of the mine early, consistent with family memory "without a scratch on him" (personal interview). Also, documentation shows that Giuseppe's body, unlike most other remains brought out of Mines 6 and 8, was identified by Frank Martin (Francesco Martino), who was at the time one of the few Italian merchants in Monongah.[18] Giuseppe's family likely made purchases at Martin's store, and the proprietor would probably have come to know the boy.[19] Giuseppe's body was placed in row A, number 1, the first grave in the Italian cemetery (MMRC, cemetery records). His body's early removal from the mine, Martin's personal identification, and the grave site add support to the family's memory of the condition of Giuseppe's body. This straightforward information lacked the tortured fabrications for the assignment of remains in the other four boxes in Company House 177.

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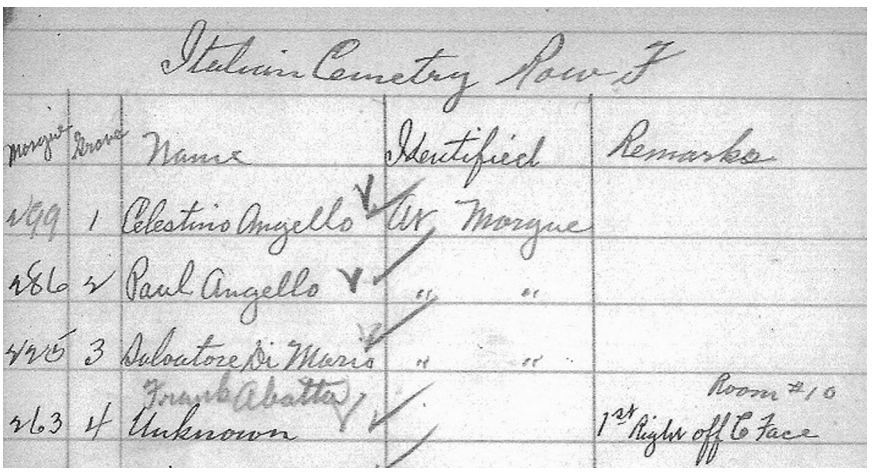
The recovery of Maria's nineteen-year-old son, Carlo, and husband, Francesco, was convoluted as well as fabricated. Carlo was noted to be the 127th and Francesco the 263rd body brought out of Mine 6 (MMRC, recovery worksheet). However, like the integrity and identification of many other remains, these notations are suspect. For example, a "dead" man who was recorded as having been removed from the mines and buried in Monongah was married in Italy a year later, while another "dead" man who was supposedly buried is not noted to have been removed from the mines (Tropea 2013b, 2017a). In a similarly offhand manner, the names of Maria's son and husband were superimposed over the notation "unknown" for already buried remains in the Italian cemetery (MMRC, cemetery worksheet). Carlo's name was used to label unidentified remains in row B, grave site 14, and Francesco's name was used to label unknown remains in row F, grave site 4 (MMRC, cemetery worksheet).

Consistent with these machinations, no person was noted to have identified the bodies of Carlo or Francesco. There is also no record that the body of the boarder, Francesco Todero, was brought out of the mines. Still, his name was used to legitimize remains in row G, grave site 15, while another document shows a different miner, Francesco Antonio Guarascio, occupying that same grave site (MMRC, cemetery records). Lastly, there is no notation that Maria's brother was ever brought out of the mines with either an Italian or company name, and his death was not officially recognized until months after the explosions (MMRC, miner file 2). Even after the brother's death was acknowledged, an anglicized name, "Frank Gatano," was used

Figure 4: Francesco over Unknown (image used with permission from West Virginia and Regional History Center, WVU Libraries).



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to replace a name that had been listed for row B, grave site 3, while the correct name, Francesco Gaetani, appears on another document for that same site (MMRC, cemetery worksheet; MMRC, cemetery records).

Thus, documents confirm not only the details and depths of covert actions but also their coordinated nature: names from the company payroll were provided to the morgue, whose personnel in turn gave names they had not used to cemetery workers, who used them for unknown remains or vague collections of body parts. The morgue and cemetery personnel colluded to eliminate the unidentified and to reduce the grave plots listed with unknown remains. Corpses and names were used with no integrity, so that covert organization could allow identification and burial of all missing miners, even those who did not die (Tropea 2017a).

Research, Legends and Public History

Failure to explore the nature and mechanisms of Monongah's covert recovery, coupled with lack of rigor in use of primary sources, allowed legends of unreported dead men and boys to prevail for a century (McAteer 2007). Then, during and subsequent to Monongah's centennial, and again based on no credible research, the numbers of unreported dead miners and boys increased almost fourfold, using numbers that were further embellished by adding unreported dead women to the imagined lot (Tropea 2013b; Wilson 2011; Rossi 2007). In Italy in 2013, a labor union, seeking to identify an Italian heroine with a Monongah statute, commemorated the widow Catterina Davia but misconstrued research to fit a chauvinistic and patronizing portrait of the woman (Tropea 2013b).[20] Political distortions in commemoration claims may be understandable. But falsities in song, public history, or stone may readily morph into validation.[21] This effect is strongly suggested by a monument placed in Monongah but constructed in Italy. This monument not only presents in stone unsubstantiated legends as fact but also depicts a "baby boy miner."[22] Only a person with an imagination far removed from credible research or familiarity with mining realities could consider a child that size being taken into the Monongah mines.

Similarly, the stories of harmful effects of recovery actions may provide new fodder for romanticizing the suffering of the women of Monongah. Without evidence beyond a widow's weeping, without indications of her decisions and actions in other settings, without a framework of biography or character, Maria Gaetani Abate, like many mining widows, could become another sanctimonious caricature of grief portrayed with patronizing empathy—a commemorated fantasy with no agency, not an authentic woman. At the very least, verification of situations this woman faced and the decisions she exercised before and after the Monongah disaster are important: they help to distinguish effects of disaster from those of her personal agency.

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Figure 5: Baby Boy Miner.

To substantiate a historical woman—to disclose knowledge of her prior and subsequent experiences—contributes more subtle understandings of a disastrous event and its consequences. Without exploring the nature and role of Maria's agency, she may become just another part of the uninformed sentimentality that haloes the Monongah heroine statute and the baby boy miner, thus confusing, not contributing to, understandings of a historic Appalachian disaster (Tropea 2013a; Tropea and Salvati 2017).[23]

An Unexceptional Woman

At age forty-three, with six of her children, Maria departed Castrovillari, the town where she was born, where she married, and where she gave birth to nine children, seven of whom survived childhood; she joined her husband and son in Monongah fourteen months before the explosions (MMRC, miner file 2). Maria's pre-migrant life was largely domestic and provincial, difficult to distinguish from the many transnational women who migrated to the West Virginia coalfields, and difficult to distinguish as relevant to the Monongah disaster. Two crucial incidents, however, corroborated by family lore and substantiated by records, help frame Maria's behavior in situations

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before and after Monongah's aftermath. One incident occurred in Naples before Maria departed from Italy, while the other situation unfolded after she was widowed and traveled to Niagara Falls, New York. Both incidents suggest an ill-informed and unsure person who, nonetheless, acted with a determination that boarded on stubbornness, not unlike her Monongah behavior.

Prior to a planned 1906 departure from the port of Naples, Maria was asked to pay extra money for the family's voyage, a demand that she believed to be an attempt at extortion. Her daughter, Luigina, concerned with the consequences of refusal, advised her mother to pay the money or the people might "do something bad" (personal interview). Maria refused to pay, and the family did not depart for the United States. Documents confirm the family story: the manifest for the ship, the Moltke, scheduled to arrive in New York on September 4, 1906, lists the names of Maria and her six children—all crossed out. Other records show, again consistent with family memories, that Maria arrived in New York on September 25, on the ship Prinz Adalbert, three weeks after the first scheduled arrival—without two of her children.[24] A granddaughter, who knew both Maria and Luigina, offered an interpretation of the incident in Naples. The granddaughter said both women could be obstinate, but she considered Luigina far more capable; she believed, like Luigina, that Maria could not fully gauge the consequences of refusing the extortionists' demands (personal interview). There is no evidence to contradict this account, which supports the records as well as other examples that the granddaughter recalled from Maria's life. Lack of savvy and foresight in responding to a situation in which language was not a problem must be recognized in understanding Maria's confusions and responses during the administration of relief in Monongah's aftermath.

Notoriety, Relief, and Rules

International notoriety accompanied the 1907 deaths of hundreds of transnational migrants digging coal in Monongah's ostensibly modern and well-managed mines, and the aftermath portended even more infamy and unrest. Many persons and groups arrived in Monongah, adding a social volatility to the physical horror of managing mangled bodies. Reporters offered exaggerations and fluctuations in the numbers of reported dead; organized labor hurled recriminations against capital and company officials, and politicians provocatively replied; mobilization of the national guard added the specter of force; and an anguished, largely migrant, population lingered in town with sparse resources and no work. In addition, the fate of hundreds of widows and orphans, as well as other dependents in the United States and Europe, posed a strategic problem, a problem that was made worse by emergent local relief organizations with their competition,

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uncertainty, opaqueness, social exclusion, and overstated claims for needed resources (Moore 1907; Tropea 2013b). Those early local relief efforts portended more and prolonged disorder, notoriety, and opportunities for corruption, according to the influential industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie (Tropea 2007).

Carnegie, who helped develop the Fairmont Coalfield in which the Monongah mines were located (the coke produced was vital for his steel industries), was also experienced in charity. Within a week of the explosions, Carnegie's agents established the Monongah Mines Relief Committee (MMRC), which supplanted the local relief organizations. Carnegie provided a significant financial contribution to the newly formed committee, and Catholics and ethnics were leveraged onto the MMRC (Tropea 2007). The MMRC administered solicitations and distributions of funds, audited financial and administrative transactions, facilitated the departure of dependents from company houses, and kept records, which were archived (Lohmann and Johnson 1993; Tropea 2013b). Yet even a well-founded organization, established to manage an abrupt and enforced transition from grief to planning, experienced difficulties, especially with alien and illiterate widows. The bureaucracy of relief, like the furtive recovery actions, was challenged by a polyglot and provincial population, one that lacked experience with rational-legal organization as well as with covert, coordinated machinations (Tropea 1989).

Administration of the aftermath was bifurcated by functions—recovery and relief—forms, rules, and experiential impacts. Covert recovery by recovery workers and company officials was largely spontaneous and informal, while public relief was largely planned and bureaucratic; the former mediated between splattered flesh and social decorum, and the latter between destroyed and productive labor and capital. One organization negotiated outcomes in specific situations, and the other created general rules to guide in many situations; one confused through sleight of hand, and the other through regulations. The MMRC personnel, like the company surveyors trawling for death prospects, entered company houses to collect personal information from widows, an action that once again trod onto a cultural minefield. Strangers entering the domiciles of lone women with questions about personal matters violated the norms of many peoples, but it was particularly egregious for south Italian widows, who were powerless and largely left to their own devices. Deceit is often used by less powerful persons in what they perceive as risky encounters; it was a resource well cultivated and especially relevant in south Italy, where history and culture taught women its effective use (Elkins 1959; Tropea 2013a). For example, like other Italian widows, Maria responded to the relief committee's survey question about savings with "none" or "no," although her family reported

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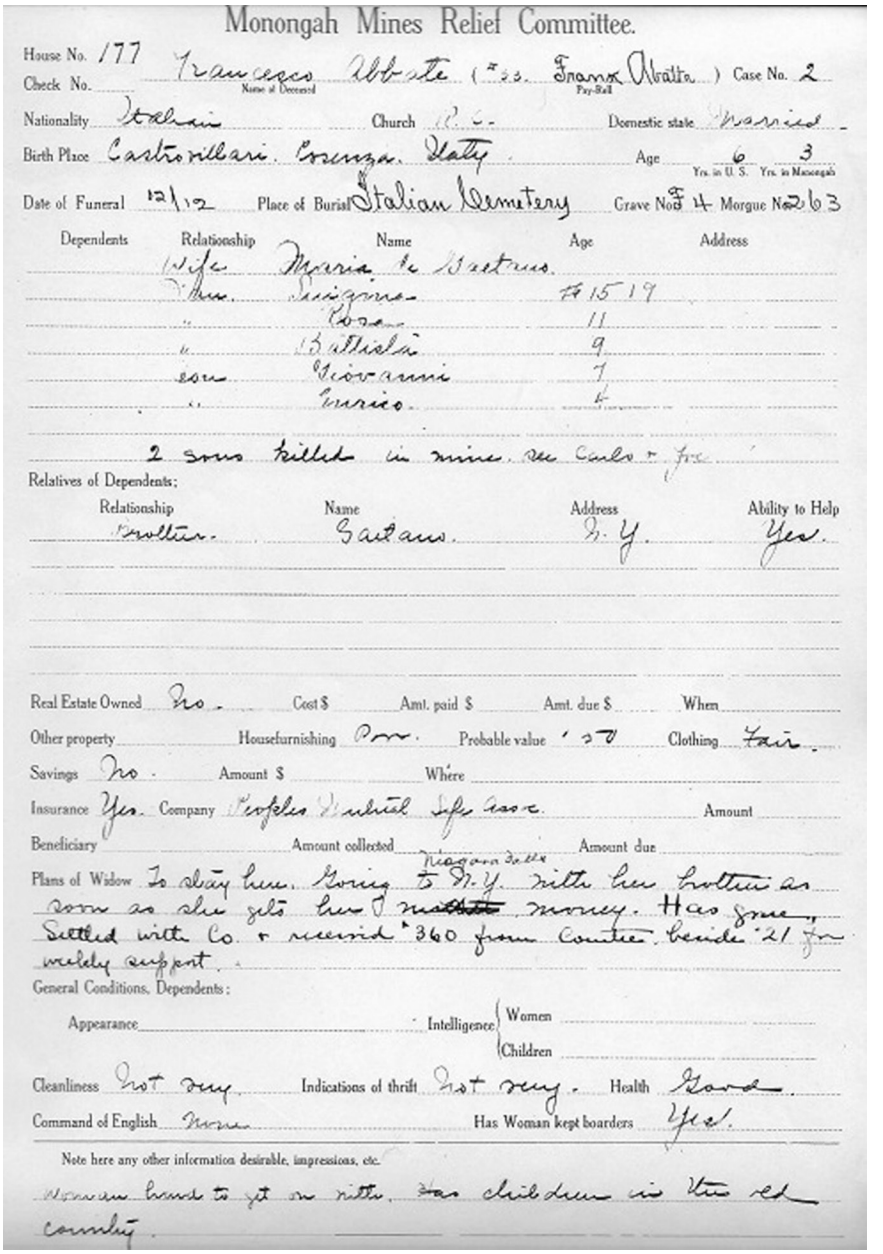
Figure 6: MMRC form (image used with permission from West Virginia and Regional History Center, WVU Libraries).



Monongah Mines Relief Committee.

House No. 177 Francesco Abbate (Jr. Frank Abatta) Case No. 2
Check No. Name of Deceased Pay-Roll

Nationality Italian Church R. C. Domestic state Married

Birth Place Castrovillari. Cosenza. Italy. Age 6 3 Yrs. in U. S. Yrs. in Monongah

Date of Funeral 12/12 Place of Burial Italian Cemetery Grave No 4 Morgue No 263

Dependents	Relationship	Name	Age	Address
	Wife	Maria de Bartrus.		
	Dau.	Luigina	15	19
	"	Rosa	11	
	"	Battista	9	
	Son	Giovanni	7	
	"	Enrico	4	

2 sons killed in mine. See Card & file.

Relatives of Dependents;

Relationship	Name	Address	Ability to Help
Brother.	Gaetano.	N. Y.	Yes.

Real Estate Owned No. Cost $ Amt. paid $ Amt. due $ When

Other property Housefurnishing Poor. Probable value $ 20 Clothing Fair.

Savings No. Amount $ Where

Insurance Yes. Company Peoples Industrial Life Assc. Amount

Beneficiary Amount collected Amount due

Plans of Widow To stay here. Going to N. Y. with her brother as soon as she gets her ~~husbands~~ money. Has some money Settled with Co & received $360 from Courier. Beside $21 for weekly support.

General Conditions, Dependents:

Appearance Intelligence { Women / Children

Cleanliness Not very. Indications of thrift Not very. Health Good.

Command of English None Has Woman kept boarders Yes.

Note here any other information desirable, impressions, etc.

Woman knows to get on with. Has children in the old country.

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she and Francesco had accrued savings for a business they intended to open in Pittsburgh (MMRC, miner file 2; personal interview). Of course, deceit compromised the non-antagonistic spirit and rationality of relief at which MMRC aimed and made their exchanges with foreign widows less benign and effective than was hoped.

Other factors challenged the administration of relief. As noted, the relief committee worked in the aftermath of a disaster of great scale with international notoriety, nationwide solicitations, and distribution of monies to hundreds of dependents. The MMRC personnel could not ease misunderstandings or tensions with explanations that would have been permitted by a common language and culture. Also, to accommodate new miners and resume coal extraction, there was a need to evacuate well over a hundred widows and many more children and other dependents from company houses. Nonetheless, it is difficult to justify the damaging descriptions, condescending comments, and prejudicial notes recorded about widows (Tropea 2013a). The MMRC form on Maria's household is relatively benign but still describes her as "not very" clean and "not very" thrifty—this, for a woman who made her own soap.[25] Maria's MMRC form was probably completed in the presence of Filippo Pellegrini, a member of the MMRC board, who also served as witness for Maria when she signed her "X" for a $3.50 check on January 20, 1908 (MMRC, miner file 20). A local newspaper also identified "Pellegrino" [*sic*] for surety when Maria was appointed administrator of her husband's and brother's estates (*Fairmont West Virginian* 1908).[26] Such support was necessary for a widow alone without *paesani* or the use of English. Indeed, the records show that Maria received help for body identification, completion of MMRC forms, and witnesses for check cashing and court transactions from three Italians in the aftermath: Martin (Martino), Pellegrini, and D'Andrea, the local priest. Nevertheless, Maria floundered in her own errors as well as through the confusion wrought by the bureaucratic administration of relief (MMRC, miner file 2; *Fairmont West Virginian* 1908).

The MMRC's rules and procedures may have made financial and administrative sense, but not necessarily existential sense. For example, because of an age-of-dependent rule, Luigina, Maria's teenage daughter, received no short-term relief or compensation for the death of her father. Another rule did not allow Maria compensation for the loss of her sons who died in the mines. Ironically, if the youngest son, Giuseppe, had not died in the mines, he, unlike Luigina, would have received both short-term relief and compensation for his father's death. These allocation rules seem arbitrary, if not cruel. This arbitrariness was made worse by flaws in executing the rules or by a widow's failure to correct administrative errors, both of which applied to Maria: she was entitled to $4.00 per week to sustain

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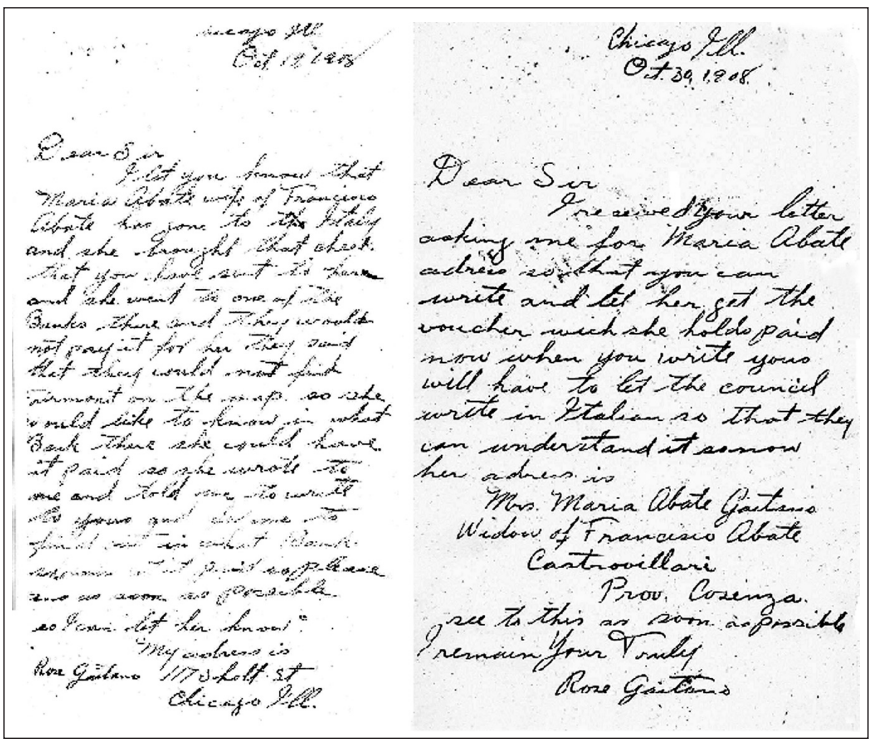
herself and her four qualified children but received only $3.50 during her stay in Monongah (MMRC, miner file 2). Maria almost certainly did not understand the rules, recognize errors in their execution, or identify corrections that were not made in short-term relief or final settlement. The MMRC final report shows a settlement amount of $896 due to Maria, a total that does not recognize deductions made for temporary relief; the actual amount that should have been received was about $866 dollars (Monongah Mines Relief Committee 1910). Yet the final settlement check was for $439 dollars. Worse still, when the check eventually found its way to Italy, it could not be cashed. Unlike other widows who cashed their checks in Italy, there is no receipt for Maria's check in the files. Three years after the explosions, however, there is a receipt for a $76 supplemental check for four of the children signed with Maria's "X" in Italy (MMRC, miner file 2). Records suggest that Maria did not receive all the funds for her losses to which the

Figure 7: Niece's letters (image used with permission from West Virginia and Regional History Center, WVU Libraries).



Chicago Ill
Oct 19 1908

Dear Sir
I let you know that Maria Abate wife of Francisco Abate has gone to Italy and she brought that check that you have sent to her and she went to one of the Banks there and they would not pay it for her they said that they would not find Piemont on the maps so she would like to know in what Bank there she could have it paid as she would like me and told me to write to you and let me to find out in what Bank Piemont it is paid so please send me as soon as possible so I can let her know
My address is
Rose Gaitano 1173 Loth st
Chicago Ill.

Chicago Ill.
Oct. 29. 1908.

Dear Sir
I received your letter asking me for Maria Abate address so that you can write and let her get the voucher which she holds paid now when you write you will have to let the council write in Italian so that they can understand it as now her adress is
Mrs. Maria Abate Gaitano
Widow of Francisco Abate
Castrovillari
Prov. Cosenza.
I see to this as soon as possible
I remain Your Truly
Rose Gaitano

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bureaucracy, however capricious, had entitled her. Like notations made in the recovery of bodies, in the house surveys, and on burial worksheets, financial documents identify actions that aggravated uncertainties and confusions and shaped emotions, well beyond the shock of deaths.

For Maria, these uncertainties were overwhelming; they probably prompted her premature departure from Monongah, which, like other decisions, amplified problems beyond the financial for her and her children. Maria seems cognitively awkward in many ways. She failed to provide a correct name for her brother who died in Mine 6, and she made no apparent contribution during the six months of communications between the MMRC and the Italian authorities to ascertain her brother's death (MMRC, miner file 131). And problems only increased: during the period of confusion over the brother's death, an imposter in Italy laid claim to the relief benefits intended for his legitimate widow. All these instances of confusion likely drove Maria to seek support from her brother, Benedetto, in Niagara Falls.[27] In this anxious move, Maria lost whatever information and support received by the widows who remained in Monongah, including the schedule of fund disbursement and aid from the nearby Italian consulate office in Fairmont. The MMRC solicited and received monies to build the beneficiaries' fund for some months before final distribution, which was made in August 1908. Yet as early as March—only one month after her February departure from Monongah—Maria was writing to the MMRC to ask if "you have started to distribute the rest of the fund" (MMRC, miner file 2). In that same letter, Maria informed the MMRC of her New York address and her plans to return to Italy "in a month or so" (MMRC, miner file 2). In fact, Maria departed for Italy in June—without notifying the MMRC of her Italian mailing address. A Fairmont bank letter for that same June suggests that Maria, uninformed, made still another inquiry about the settlement check (MMRC, miner file 2). Worse, this confusion over schedules, money, and mailing was not relieved by her brother in Niagara Falls. There is no evidence that Benedetto was present when Maria arrived in Niagara Falls or during any part of her four-month stay. Benedetto, establishing a business in Chicago at that time, could not provide the help Maria no doubt expected and upon which she and her children depended (personal interview).

It seems evident that the domestic competence the youthful Maria had acquired in her village did not prepare her for the situations she encountered with extortionists in Naples or with English-speaking recovery workers and administrators of relief in Monongah. Moreover, domesticity did not prepare her for independent planning, including the need to unravel the problems of her own creation discussed above—such as those that occurred in Naples and Monongah. The agency of children, in this case as so often, is also ignored in deciphering the consequences of disaster. Maria's pivotal

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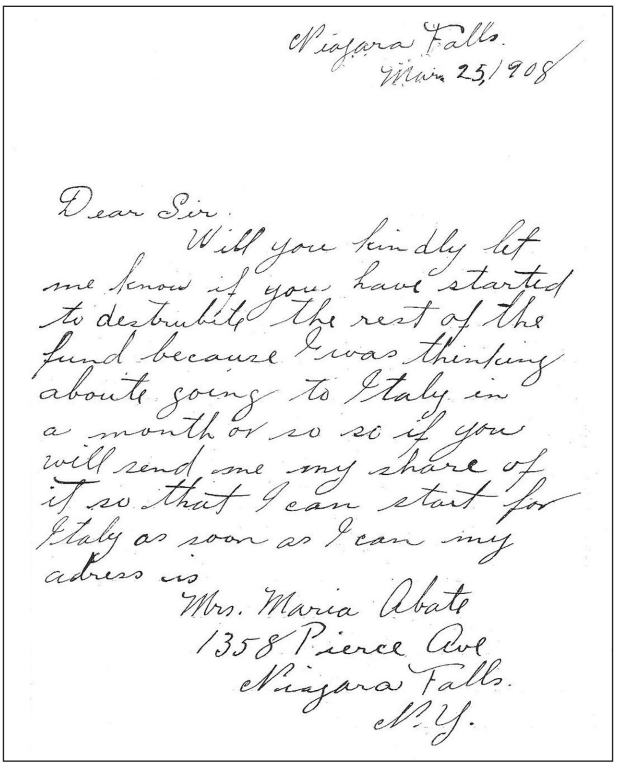
Figure 8: Maria's letter (image used with permission from West Virginia and Regional History Center, WVU Libraries).



Niagara Falls.
March 25, 1908

Dear Sir.
Will you kindly let me know if you have started to destribute the rest of the fund because I was thinking about going to Italy in a month or so so if you will send me my share of it so that I can start for Italy as soon as I can my adress is
Mrs. Maria Abate
1358 Pierce Ave
Niagara Falls.
N.Y.

decisions and their outcomes were witnessed and, in some cases, contested by her eldest daughter, Luigina. The daughter's firsthand experiences with her mother's failed decisions likely provoked her misgivings when Maria decided to return to Italy; Luigina refused to go. It is not evident when—following the mine explosion, the hasty trip to meet Benedetto, or the stay in Niagara Falls—Maria decided to return to Italy and her daughter challenged that decision. How this conflict was shaped by differences in cultural assimilation, age, competence, or perceived prospects is also unknown. In any event, family memories are certain of Luigina's firm refusal to return to Italy and Maria's equally firm insistence that Luigina return. This serious impasse and the hastened compromise Maria and Luigina reached illustrate another consequence seeded in Monongah's aftermath, one whose bitter conclusion haunts the family to this day (personal interview).

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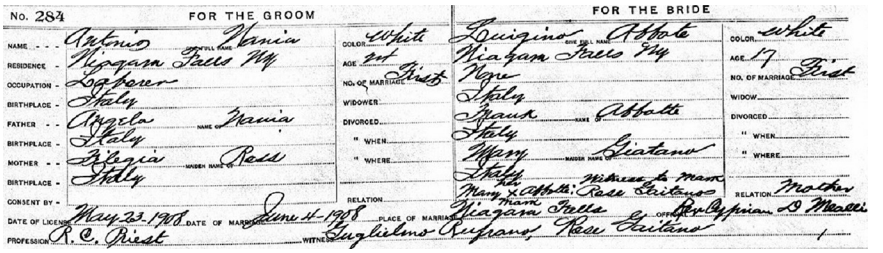
Culture, Power, and Patriarchy

When Maria arrived in Niagara Falls in 1908, her brother may have already departed for Chicago. That his absence may have shaped Maria's and Luigina's choices prior to Maria's departure for Italy can only be speculative. In any event, while the financial, legal, and administrative demands of international travel were daunting enough, Luigina's heart-wrenching refusal to return with her mother challenged not only Maria's authority and culture but also her capacity to cope. Maria faced transatlantic travel without her eldest daughter to help with the four younger children.[28] Each inflexible in her own way, mother and daughter reached a compromise that allowed tradition to prevail and Luigina's independence to be realized: she could remain in Niagara Falls—as a married woman. So, in addition to the return to Italy, before Maria's departure, a marriage had to be arranged and a travel companion found to accompany her (personal interview). The compromise between a strong-willed daughter and an adamant and traditional southern Italian mother ultimately proved to be a disaster.

Under normal circumstances, Maria's brother would be expected to help her select a marriage prospect for her daughter, preferably a *paesano* from their home village. But, as noted, Benedetto may not have been available or willing to accommodate his sister in this process. Did mother and daughter cooperate in or dispute the selection of a husband? What, if anything, was the *quid pro quo* between Luigina and Antonio, the man she married—not a *paesano*? No evidence about these central questions is available. But the prospective husband was found, and—whatever the accompanying understandings—an engagement was made, a license secured, and a marriage celebrated on June 4, 1908, less than six months after the deaths of Luigina's father, two brothers, and an uncle. "Mary Abbate" [*sic*] consented with her 'X' to this union; the marriage was also witnessed by her niece Rosa, Benedetto's daughter.[29]

Only a few days after the wedding, Maria departed for Italy with four children and a brother-in-law, Giuseppe Abate. Other than attendance at the

Figure 9: Marriage record.



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wedding and a letter dated the following day, there is no other evidence of Maria's presence in Niagara Falls until her return four years later. On her arrival in Italy, Maria resided with family or close friends and worked as a cook in Castrovillari. Maria's return was probably not what she expected, but rather something like what Luigina may have envisioned and feared. Castrovillari was the location where Maria's son Battista was beaten badly by a shoemaker to whom he was apprenticed, and the debilitating results were evident throughout Battista's life. The death of "Uncle Benny," who had become dear to Maria's youngest son, Enrico, also occurred here (personal interview).

In the meantime, Luigina's marriage to Antonio was proving so difficult that she sought the comfort and support of her mother and four siblings. Luigina likely provided the resources for their return to Niagara Falls, where they arrived in 1912, seventeen months after the birth of Luigina's first child, Angelo (personal interview). The hastily arranged marriage may have been made without due diligence, without adequate and mutual knowledge of Antonio's experiences or character. For example, Antonio had stabbed a man in the back in a saloon brawl in December 1905, about two-and-a-half years before the marriage, in an area not far from the business owned by Luigina's uncle, Benedetto (*Buffalo Courier* 1905). It is not known if Benedetto had any knowledge of the brawl or even knew Antonio. If the brawl, as indicated in the newspaper, was inter-ethnic, however, it would not have eliminated Antonio as a prospective husband; inter-ethnic conflict was not associated with domestic violence (personal interview). Moreover, Antonio had no immediate family in the United States from whose members additional information might have been extracted. On the other hand, Antonio may not have been fully aware of how incisive and strong-willed his prospective bride was, how challenging she would be to his notions of manhood (personal interview). As the marriage progressed, Antonio—no doubt frustrated by his inability to realize the patriarchal authority of a traditional south Italian husband and father—was physically aggressive with Luigina (personal interview; *Niagara Falls Gazette* 1925a, 1925b). Also, his work as a school janitor, and lack of family in the United States, contrasted with the growing presence of Luigina's kin in Niagara Falls, did not serve well his intended authority.

Luigina and Antonio's relationship was not only conflicted and violent, but also proved bizarre and fatal. For whatever reasons—contests with his wife over power, fear of his son's Americanization, or undue influence of his in-laws—in 1914, Antonio took their three-year-old son, Angelo, to Italy without his wife's consent. When Antonio returned to Niagara Falls, it was without their son. Angelo remained in Italy for six years, until he was nine years old, before his father arranged for his return to Niagara Falls.[30]

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Figure 10: Homicide to manslaughter.

FASTEST GROWING CITY IN NEW YORK STATE—POWER CITY OF THE WORLD

NIAGARA FALLS GAZETTE

Home Edition

TWENTY-SIX PAGES — TWENTY-SIX PAGES

MURDER CHARGE IS REDUCED TO MANSLAUGHTER BY JUDGE IN CASE OF NIAGARA WOMAN

Appears from Evidence to Have Been Justifiable Homicide, Piper Says;

The family believes this long absence was another way that Antonio tried to exercise power over Luigina, and there is no evidence to contradict this view (personal interview). But physical abuse was Antonio's more direct and more often used exercise of power. The death of Luigina's unborn baby, or babies, is suspected to have been a consequence of his assaults (personal interview). Like many abused wives, Luigina withheld serious responses to Antonio's aggression for a substantial amount of time. However, after years of marriage, she finally put an end to their volatile union. When Antonio, having threatened to kill Luigina in a drunken rage, returned to their bedroom armed with a piece of wood, Luigina fatally shot him (*Niagara Falls Gazette* 1925a).

While there is no evidence for the deaths *in utero* of Luigina's baby or babies, as the family suspected, a boarder and witness before the grand jury stated that Antonio had long mistreated his wife, testimony that was corroborated by Luigina's son, Angelo (*Niagara Falls Gazette* 1925b). A month later, the state dropped criminal charges against Luigina.[31] Whatever the nature and number of incidents of violence exercised within the union of Antonio and Luigina, the unhappy course of the marriage was deeply linked to events in Monongah.

Conclusion

This work has considered how uncritical descriptions, unconfirmed claims, and imagination helped shape public understanding of a coal mine disaster. It has used an exceptional set of primary sources to explore what

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has not been addressed in most research: the covert nature of body recovery; artificial and social reconstructions of the dead; gendered and cultural biases by organizations toward women's emotions; existential clashes in aftermath administration; and unexamined long-term consequences of disaster. Documented details of Maria Gaetani Abate's experiences have distinguished anguish produced by death and organized responses to disaster from consequences shaped by the widow's own decisions and actions. A body of literature that fails to substantiate covert actions of recovery, rules for relief, or widows' agency fails to address much of what constituted a mine disaster for those who experienced it.

Differences in power, language, culture, gender, and biography have informed the analysis of materials drawn from the MMRC archives and from oral family histories. Documenting relations among covert or bureaucratic organization, social transactions, and personal experiences in a historical disaster is challenging, not unlike substantiating the experiences of an illiterate transnational woman. Both are accomplished here through research on a particular widow and a particular disaster. Still, this work holds general implications. It demonstrates the importance of relations between the structural and the personal that have been left unexplored or left to anecdote in too many disaster reports. Investigations of mine disasters that do not query company behavior to expose covert actions, that do not document physical and social reconstructions, that treat emotions uncritically, that avoid the role of subjectivities in a rational/legal order, that grant no agency or informative value to women's experiences, and that abort inquiry into long-term consequences quite simply fail social history. This report on Monongah shows how research can address these areas and better serve understandings of Appalachia's coalfields, its tragedies, and its peoples—dead miners and widows alike.

Problems remain with celebrations of heritage, as well as history. Mining cultures uncritically built on recall and oral traditions, with more repetition and embellishment than documentation and analysis, will continue to serve sentimental notions of heritage, not fact, however painful. Stories and songs as well as commemorations and monuments can echo old legends of mine disasters so forcefully that they serve as surrogate histories. Regional scholars know the result: history suffers when such "heritage" prevails. It is a special responsibility of regional scholars to clarify conflicts between substantiated knowledge and orchestrated celebrations, between evidence and lore, between fact and pride; that responsibility is not enviable or even entirely viable. Since Monongah's centennial, its public history has become more international, more focused on spectacle, and more distorted by ill-informed commemorations, memorials, and publications that dishonor facts and the dignity of miners who are long dead. Unless flaws in stories

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as well as storytellers are revealed by research like this, scholars, regional or otherwise, may be far less able to challenge the appropriations and romantic inflations of legend.

Acknowledgments

The author thanks Mary Ann Jamieson, Niagara Falls, New York, and Giuseppe Cino, Lago (Consenza), Italia, for their special information and help in the research.

Notes

1. Many interviews were conducted via telephone and in person with Mary Ann Jamieson, daughter of Maria's youngest child, Enrico, from April 2015 to the present. While other family members were consulted by both Mary Ann and the author, this was to corroborate or refine her recall of events; all text references noting "personal interview" are from Mary Ann's contribution unless otherwise specified. Primary sources for this disaster are housed in the Monongah Mines Relief Committee (MMRC) Records collection in the West Virginia and Regional History Center at West Virginia University. The MMRC final report is located in Box 1; files for each of the deceased miners in Boxes 2–13; correspondence, notes (worksheets) on the recovery and the cemetery, and sundry other documents are in Boxes 14–15; and the house survey is held in the last two storage boxes.

2. See also the Coalmining History Research Center, https://web.archive.org/web/*/http://www.cmhrc.co.uk/site/disasters/* (accessed October 23, 2018).

3. See also "Robert plays Monongah," 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UeMN99DXPI4; Giovanni Centrella, "Monongah," 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSGltKgkbQ4.

4. See West Virginia Archives and History, http://www.wvculture.org/history/notewv/coalminedisasters.html (accessed October 23, 2018); *Goldenseal*, *The Magazine of West Virginia Traditional Life*, http://www.wvculture.org/goldenseal/ (accessed September 12, 2018).

5. The disasters of interest occurred in the formative stages of the union of the modern university and the modern state; prospects of managing institutions, as well as work on macro processes shaping those institutions were most important for both government and university (Tropea 2017b, 241–42).

6. Dora Grub, Marion County Historical Society, September 2, 2013. Also, Janet Salvati, a colleague, who attended Monongah High School during the 1950s, said the Monongah disaster was not even part of the school curriculum.

7. Hunzacker's observation on "the role played by cultural schemas and perceptions of low-status others' adversities" (Hunzacker 2014, 166) holds for Monongah: transnational migrant men were cast as agents of the disaster and "dark little men," while Polish women made "a ritual of sobbing" (Kellogg 1907–1908, 1315). This can be contrasted with treatment of miners in the far less heterogeneous Scofield disaster (Dilley 1900). For efforts to correct this in the literature, see Enarson and Pease (2016).

8. In addition to cited internet sources, US archival information was gathered from the Diocesan Archives, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston (DWC) in Wheeling, West Virginia, and the Center for Migration Studies (CMS) in New York City. In Italy, secular and religious records were secured from regional archives and local *comune* and church records. Recorded interviews were conducted in Italy and West Virginia with descendants of miners, as well as other local persons.

9. Professor Alan Kraut (History, American University, Washington, DC) expressed the challenge that a woman like Maria poses for research, in an email to the author, July 20, 2014: "No one has ever solved the problem of breaking through the anonymity of the inarticulate (non-literate) individual immigrant." Without such an effort, women like Maria may be reduced to cultural or clinical stereotypes; see Tropea (2013a) for these results.

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10. This system included a miner placing his numbered "check" near the mine head before he entered and on his car of loaded coal, which enabled accounting for the physical presence of the miner and his productive yield. Without the check system intact, the company had only payroll lists to provide to the press, which effectively masked the absence of information on missing miners.

11. Most miners received monies for coal weight extracted; they were piece-rate workers, not wage laborers. In far fewer cases, like constructing bracing, workers received fixed daily wages (MMRC Time-Worksheets).

12. Working relations between the company and local Catholic churches were close: monies were withdrawn from the miners' pay and transferred to church accounts. The contributions were mandatory, not voluntary; see Records of the Church of Our Lady of Pompeii, Monongah, West Virginia, (church registry) at the Center for Migration Studies in New York City.

13. Center for Migration Studies, New York City, Records of the Church of Our Lady of Pompeii, Monongah, West Virginia.

14. Domenico Guerra, who was listed as a boarder in Company House 177, was boarding elsewhere, "at Paladino's in old Mgh" as "Dom Ware" (MMRC, mining survey, House 177).

15. The family characterized Maria's post-Monongah life in this way: "She was never the same" (personal interview).

16. A "trapper" was usually a boy, minimum age twelve by law, who controlled air flow by opening and closing doors that partitioned parts of the mine.

17. Kellogg's observation—that "their cries rose and fell in the half unison of Slavic peoples which make almost a ritual of sobbing" (Kellogg 1907–1908, 1315) —and the condescending and duplicitous comment by the company man Haas—that "identifications at the cemetery were greatly hindered by the ignorance of some of the bereaved" who "would allow relatives to be buried 'unknown'"—are indicative (Haas 1908, 18).

18. Francesco Martino was a maternal great-great uncle of the author.

19. This observation is based on language: Martin's regional dialect (Basilicata) more closely approximated Giuseppe's (Calabria) than that of the other Italian merchant (Abruzzo).

20. This was part of an effort to provide an Italian protagonist to fit the Monongah heroine statue, placed years earlier in the town—but with no identifiable heroine (Tropea 2013b).

21. See "Robert plays Monongah," http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UeMN99DXPI4 (accessed June 19, 2019).

22. This monument was erected and dedicated by the initiative of the Italian government on December 6, 2007.

23. See also Gina Martino Dahlia, "The Monongah heroine," 2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kb7vk-KDg-w (accessed September 3, 2018).

24. Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, http://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/ (accessed June 9, 2019).

25. Maria can be compared to Catterina Davia, a Monongah widow, who is now claimed to represent the "Monongah heroine." Catterina is described on the MMRC form as "stupid" and of "no intelligence" and is also remembered as the woman who rejected remains said to be those of her husband (Tropea 2013a, 375–77; 2013b, 85–86).

26. "Estate" may be misleading: in most cases, this amounted to little more than outstanding wages held by the company.

27. Maria received her first weekly check of $3.50 on January 20, 1908, and had received a total of $21.00, which suggests she left Monongah on the week of February 24, for New York (MMRC, miner file 2).

28. Maria visited the Italian Consulate Office in Buffalo, New York, May 8, 1908 (Atti di Morte, Parte II Serie C, 1910. No. 7. Abbate [*sic*] Francesco, Castrovillari, Cosenza, Italy). She would have gone there for purposes of repatriation (source: interviews with Lucia Caracci Cullens, Honorary Vice-Consul, in 2017 and 2018).

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29. New York, County Marriage Records, 1908 (from New York, County Marriage Records, 1847–1849, 1907–1936, Ancestry.com https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=try&db=FSMarriageNewYork&h=570703).

30. Antonio Nania, US Passport Applications, 1795–1925 (Ancestry.com, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=try&db=USpassports&h=170830 [accessed October 23, 2018]).

31. The information on the grand jury dismissal was provided by the County Clerk's office, Niagara Country Courthouse, Lockport, New York.

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